DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 165 020 CG 013 060

AUTHOR Seiquist, Jack
TITLE A Learning Community at West Valley College; A Videotaped Application of Rogerian Theory; Learning Theory and Applications.
PUB DATE 30 Aug 77
NOTE 49p.; Master's Thesis, Nova University

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Communication Skills; *Group Counseling; Group Dynamics; Group Instruction; *Individual Development; *Instructional Media; *Interpersonal Competence; Interpersonal Relationship; Junior Colleges; *Personal Growth; Practicums
IDENTIFIERS *Rogers (Carl)

ABSTRACT

This practicum describes a videotaped growth group/learning community experience designed and facilitated by a counselor as a practical application of Carl Rogers' theory on encounter groups. The goal was to increase students' interpersonal effectiveness. The purpose of the practicum was fourfold: (1) to form a learning community and videotape three group meetings as part of the learning strategy; (2) to apply Rogerian theory; (3) to evaluate student response, learning, and growth; and (4) to produce a demonstration videotape (edited from the three videotapes) to illustrate the learning community experience. A total of 12 meetings (one per week) were held. Videotapes were used for feedback. After the last meeting, each student filled out an evaluation questionnaire. On the whole, students reported that they were reasonably satisfied with the experience. They stated that they had gained new communication skills or improved ones they already possessed. Students reacted favorably to the videotapes, feeling the experience was useful in modifying their behaviors, enhancing self-image, and increasing self-confidence. Recommendations for expanded implementation of the practicum are included. (Author)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED165020

A LEARNING COMMUNITY AT WEST VALLEY COLLEGE: A VIDEOTAPED APPLICATION OF ROGERIAN THEORY

LEARNING THEORY AND APPLICATIONS

by

Jack Seiquist, M.A.

West Valley College

Oakland Cluster

A PRACTICUM PRESENTED TO NOVA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

NOVA UNIVERSITY

AUGUST 30, 1977

CG013060

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J Seiquist

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC) AND USERS OF THE ERIC SYSTEM."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

ABSTRACT

This practicum describes a videotaped growth group/learning community experience designed and facilitated by a counselor as a practical application of Carl Roger's theory on encounter groups. The goal was to increase students' interpersonal effectiveness.

The purpose of the practicum was fourfold: (1) to form a learning community and to videotape three group meetings as part of the learning strategy; (2) to apply Rogerian theory; (3) to evaluate student response, learning, and growth; and (4) to produce a demonstration videotape (edited from the three videotapes) to illustrate the learning community experience.

Twelve meetings were held (one per week). Videotapes were used for feedback. After the last meeting, each student filled out an evaluation questionnaire.

On the whole, students reported that they were reasonably satisfied with the experience. They stated that they had gained new communication skills or improved ones they already possessed. All reported some movement towards feeling better about themselves as persons and as communicators. Students felt very positively about the learning made possible by the videotapes, especially in the areas of modifying their behaviors, enhancing self-image, and increasing self-confidence.

Because of favorable student response, it was recommended that:

1. the number and variety of learning community experiences be increased at West Valley College;

2. videotaping be continued as a learning strategy;

3. the learning community/growth group experience be used for staff development purposes.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	page
INTRODUCTION	1
BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE	3
The Learning Community Defined	3
The Learning Community in Perspective	5
The Role of the Facilitator	8
On Videotaping	11
Summary	11
PROCEDURES	12
Limitations	14
Assumptions	16
RESULTS	17
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	25
REFERENCES	33
APPENDICES	35

INTRODUCTION

This practicum evolved out of the learning needs of students in a one-to-one communication class at West Valley College (WVC), Saratoga, California. After completing a semester-long counseling course, Achieving Dialog, these students expressed their desire to continue meeting in order to practice their listening, talking, and interacting skills. They wanted to become more proficient in interpersonal communication. To meet these needs, a follow-up learning experience was planned, implemented, and evaluated. This experience was designated a "learning community."

The conceptual basis for the learning community was derived from Carl R. Rogers' theory on encounter groups. This theory was developed as a result of Rogers' work as a therapist, research psychologist, counselor educator, and group facilitator. In practice, the learning community was an application (and testing) of Rogers' hypothesis that people can learn and grow as persons by participating in his particular style of the intensive small group experience. The meetings are open, free, and relatively unstructured. Students and facilitators interact in a supportive, honest, and caring atmosphere. They strive to create and maintain this kind of environment because they see it as conducive to risking, learning, and growing. The broad goal of the learning community was to increase students' interpersonal effectiveness.

The purpose of this practicum was fourfold:

1. to present Rogerian theory relevant to the concept and practice of a learning community at the community college level;[1]

---

[1]In all that will be said in this paper about a Rogerian-style learning community, it must be emphasized that, in fact, this is really a Seiquist-style learning community. Here's the way it is: Seiquist sees himself as taking a basically Rogerian approach to learning and interacting with students. He utilizes his present, limited knowledge, his perceptions, his interpretations, and his adaptations of Rogerian principles and practices when he joins with a group of students and invites them to form a learning community. Seiquist is, moreover, an eclectic. He has incorporated into his personal style learnings from a wide range of teachers and practitioners. Nonetheless, the impact of Rogers has been extensive, pervasive, and certainly the most influential. In light of this (and with the above qualifications), it seems honest to entitle this practicum, "An Application of Rogerian Theory."

2. to form a learning community and videotape three sessions as part of the learning strategy;

3. to assess students' response, learning, and personal growth by having them complete a final evaluation form (Appendix C); and

4. to produce a demonstration videotape (edited from the above three) illustrative of this kind of learning experience.

Besides Rogers, other authors were cited to show how their ideas influence the process of a learning community.

A definite need was perceived at WVC for a wider knowledge and use of the Rogerian approach to education. The learning community represents a viable alternative to the traditional lecture approach to teaching, yet it seems that a majority of students as well as faculty and administrators do not even know about such an experience, much less recognize its power to effect learning. The learning community approach can also serve as a complement to the lecture method. It provides experiential laboratory education, which is especially effective for promoting personal growth and for enhancing interpersonal skills.

In the short run, the videotapes were used to provide feedback to foster participants' learning. In the longer run, the tapes were seen as one means of communicating knowledge and understanding of the learning community. The final demonstration tape offers a longitudinal view of learning and growth occurring over a twelve-week time-span. It shows the instructional methodology unique to the learning community. It provides observable evidence of some gains in skill usage (due, at least in part, to the learning community), student progress reports, problem-solving, and decision-making. Lastly, it shows the actual process of group interaction in selected sequences.

The method of investigation can be outlined as follows:

1. A learning community was formed.

2. Twelve meetings were conducted (one meeting per week on Fridays from 2:30-4:00 p.m. -- and later).

3. Three meetings (the first, fifth, and twelfth) were videotaped, and the tapes were used for feedback.

4. A demonstration videotape was produced.

5. Students completed a final evaluation form (Appendix C) after the last meeting.

The Director of the Learning Resource Center's Production Staff, who is a developmental design specialist, authorized the production of the videotapes and offered his assistance throughout the entire project. The Dean of Counseling was supportive of this effort and authorized the formation of the learning community. Several counselors have expressed their interest in seeing the videotapes.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

> Reading maketh a full man,
> conference a ready man,
> and writing an exact man.
> Francis Bacon

By "conference," according to Abrams (1974:1567), Bacon meant "conversation, meetings." This study is about a special kind of conference, called a learning community, and the special form of conversation occurring at these meetings. The end product, the learning outcome, of these meetings, ideally speaking, is to develop persons who are "ready:" ready for human relating, ready for interpersonal communication, ready for involvement in the world of people, whether at work or at play.

The Learning Community Defined

For purposes of this practicum, the learning community can be theoretically defined as one form of the intensive group experience described by Rogers (1967:718):

> The intensive group or "workshop" group usually consists of ten to fifteen persons and a facilitator or leader. It is relatively unstructured,

> providing a climate of maximum freedom for personal expression, exploration of feelings, and interpersonal communication. Emphasis is upon the interactions among the group members, in an atmosphere which encourages each to drop his defenses and facades and thus enable him to relate directly and openly to other members of the group -- the "basic encounter." Individuals come to know themselves and each other more fully than is possible in the usual social or working relationships;the climate of openness, risk-taking, and honesty generates trust, which enables the person to recognize and change self-defeating attitudes, test out and adopt more innovative and constructive behaviors, and subsequently to relate more adequately and effectively to others in his everyday life situation.

It is important to have an accurate visual picture of the physical arrangement of the group members. Whether in chairs or on the floor, they sit in a circle, usually close together and facing one another. In actual practice, group size may be limited to eight or nine persons. This is to be seen as an ideal. Budgetary demands on college campuses may increase the number closer to fifteen, but this is an absolute maximum. A workable maximum size, including facilitators, would be thirteen. It is common to have a second facilitator, often a man and woman combination.

A brochure (Appendix B) was developed to detail for the reader and for prospective participants the particular adaptation of Rogerian theory which was utilized in this practicum. The brochure bears the simple title, "GROUP." Its contents are couched in a personal, "I-to-you" style. It has four sections, which constitute a response to the following questions:

1. What's a growth group all about?
2. Why get involved in group?
3. What communication skills can you develop?
4. Is this what you want?

The first section quotes a description by Rogers of the basic encounter group very similar to the one given above. It is taken from a flyer publicizing the La Jolla Program, which trains group facilitators in the Rogerian approach. Students are asked to "work together to create an interpersonal atmosphere characterized by deep acceptance, listening, risk-taking, involvement, commitment, and gentle frankness."

Next are discussed the author's preference for a Rogerian approach, other background experiences, and his personal style of leading groups. He states how he thinks about groups and shares his understanding of this form of a learning community. It is "an occasion for persons to meet other persons... to be a person rather than a functionary or a role-player." It is "...an opportunity to identify and express those things that are unique and authentic about yourself as an individual person, rather than hiding them behind stereotyped, conformist images of self." It also provides an opportunity to learn:

> ...to recognize and express both positive and negative feelings in a more open, sensitive, and authentic way; to get in touch with and communicate your own unique needs and desires, feelings, aspirations, hopes, dreams, goals, and ambitions.

Thus participants can hopefully heighten their self-awareness and learn to express themselves more freely and fully and genuinely. Often participants discuss problems with themselves or with personal relationships. They gain ideas, help, and support concerning these problems. They can also discover the learning community's potential for friendship, meaning, and growth, as well as positive enjoyment of being together.

The second section of the brochure sets forth the possible benefits to be gained from involvement in the learning community. It stresses the importance of having moderate and realistic expectations.

The next section attempts to alert students to specific communication skills which can be acquired or developed. Many of the more important skills are listed, including: (1) listening to oneself, trusting, and reporting inner experience; (2) empathic listening; and (3) giving and receiving feedback.

The final section checks out the reader's intentions and desires. If the person wants to be involved in this learning process, he or she is asked to make a personal commitment to attend each meeting and to take responsibility for creating the learninging community experience.

The Learning Community in Perspective

Accent on Learning is both the title of Cross' latest book and what she

sees as the theme for higher education for the 1970's, She frankly notes (1976:x) that there is little evidence that the traditional lecture approach is significantly related to student learning. She explores alternatives which have the potential to motivate and excite students about learning. Prominent among these alternatives are both unstructured and structured experiential group learning experiences. Rogerian groups, as an example, are relatively unstructured. As a modified Rogerian group, the learning community appears to be a means well suited for achieving the goals explicit in the curricular evolution which Cross describes (1976:135-231). The basic components of this evolution are: education for personal Jevelopemnt; learning about people from people; and improving interpersonal skills. Forming a learning community based on Rogerian theory and designed to promote students' learning of communication skills seems eminently appropriate to the module on "Learning Theory and Applications."

B. F. Skinner has made widely recognized and hopefully lasting contributions to the field of education. Skinner (1971) repeatedly and strongly condemned punitive methods and urged that they be replaced by rewards and positive reinforcement of appropriate behaviors. This latter methodology has been rather thoroughly put into practice in the facilitation of the learning community.

In common with other humanistic psychologists and educators, Rogers (1961:26) has an optimistic philosophical view of the person: "It has been my experience that persons have a basically positive direction." Later, Rogers (1967:730) speaks of "the natural, built-in motivation for growth and change which exists in every individual." The learning community is designed to tap into this motivating force and give it free expression.

Rogers' friend and colleague, Coulson (1973:ix), has written of the need for a sense of community in the life of societal institutions. He describes this sense of community as the feeling:

> "I am among friends. Nobody wants to hurt me." This doesn't mean, "I can get away with murder here," or "There are no standards here." But within a sensed community, you get the idea that you are safe because the others are open enough about their own mistakes that they wouldn't hurt you for yours.

Coulson is calling for an openness and honesty not common in institutions. He goes on to ask:

> Who knows how to live? No one. We are all strugglers. But ordinarily we try very hard to hide this. To sense community is to be aware that one is with fellow strugglers.

Coulson reports on several forms of the learning community. In each, people risk saying the truth. They listen and respond and are present to each other as persons. In such an interpersonal atmosphere, the sense of community tends to develop among participants, and genuinely personal learning is thereby fostered. As his title page indicates, Coulson wrote his book "That Education Might Be Personal."

The learning community which is the subject of this study can be viewed in the larger context of the "emerging model of student development." This model is being recognized by a number of community colleges "as more appropriate to their needs than past models" (O'Banion, 1974:25). This recognition may well stem from the impact of the human potential movement upon both psychology and education. Within these colleges there is a growing awareness that counselors, with their special training in interpersonal communication, can make a unique contribution to this model by creating a new curriculum. "The proper curriculum of counselors," as O'Banion (1974:27-28) sees it, "is the Human Development Curriculum." A national conference on this subject defined this curricular concept as "those instructional programs dealing essentially with the experience of the student as content and which purport to facilitate his growth as a person and as a learner." A follow-up study of one hundred community colleges offering human development courses found that:

> Major objectives of such courses were "to encourage personal growth and development, to create a supportive environment where students may learn skills in communicating with others, and plan personal change." Basic encounter skills were used in 89 percent of the institutions, and the most important practice was the use of group processes to build trust and generate feedback.

These courses may be seen as offshoots of the burgeoning group movement in the United States. A major force in this movement evolved under the influence and leadership of Carl Rogers. It was he "who introduced the term encounter to identify nontherapy groups aimed at releasing the potential of the average person" (Lande, 1976:118). He also contributed significantly to both the theoretical development and practical use of encounter groups. Rogers (1967:718) regards the intensive group experience as "one of the most effective means yet discovered for facilitating constructive learning, growth, and change...." Later, Rogers (1970:1) characterizes such groups as "the most rapidly spreading social invention of the century, and probably the most potent...."

The Role of the Facilitator

Just as the role of the therapist is crucial in therapy, so too the role of the facilitator is critical in the learning community. Cross (1976:210) notes that:

> Carl Rogers (1957) was the first to write about the existence of a "therapeutic triad" -- empathic understanding, unconditional positive regard, and congruence or genuineness -- as the "necessary and sufficient" conditions for client growth.

Interestingly enough, these three qualities of the therapist are essentially the same characteristics Rogers (1969:106-115) singles out as the fundamental attitudinal qualities of the facilitator of learning. This person must not only assimilate and exercise these qualities, but, as Rogers (1969:116) points out, must also be perceived by students as exercising them if learning is to occur.

Perhaps the most basic of these three qualities is realness or genuineness. Rogers (1969:106) says:

> When the facilitator is a real person, being what he is, entering into a relationship with the learner without presenting a front or facade, he is much more likely to be effective. This means that the feelings which he is experienceing are available to him, available to his awareness, that he is able to live these feelings, be them, and able to communicate them if appropriate.

This realness corresponds closely with the transparency and self-disclosure advocated by Jourard (1971:vi-vii). He places these concepts in an existential perspective and highlights a basic human decision:

> A choice that confronts every one at every moment is this: Shall we permit our fellows to know us as we now are, or shall we remain enigmas, wishing to be seen as persons we are not?

Like Jourard, Egan (1970:19) regards self-disclosure as "a basic step towards growth." He says, "Self-disclosure is cardinal in growth groups, pivotal in the sense that many of the good things that happen in such groups happen because of self-disclosure."

The second attitudinal quality of the facilitator is a composite of several elements. According to Rogers (1969:109), these include a "non-possessive caring" and "an acceptance of this other individual as a separate person, having worth in his own right." It involves a "belief that this other person is somehow fundamentally trustworthy." These elements taken together constitute what Rogers (1961:185) calls "unconditional positive regard."

Lastly, the facilitator needs to practice "empathic understanding" (Rogers, 1969:111). Anyone who has ever seen Rogers in person or on film (e.g., Bill McGaw's Academy Award winner, "Journey Into Self") knows that this is one of his most characteristic and highly developed skills. He brings to the relationship a deep concern to understand the other person in a non-evaluative, non-judgmental way. His is an attitude "of standing in the other's shoes, of viewing the world through the student's eyes...."

When the facilitator achieves this, Rogers (1969:111-112) describes the learner's reaction as something like, "At last someone understands how it feels and seems to be me without wanting to analyze or judge me. Now I can blossom and grow and learn." Rogers stresses another reaction of learners: deep

appreciation at the relatively rare experience of simply being understood.

The role of the facilitator can be summed up as striving for personal presence (Coulson, 1973:22). Rogers (1969:101) speaks of being "really in contact" with students. But facilitators do not make themselves present as professionals. As Rogers (1970:150) says, "...the facilitator participates as a person in his group rather than any sort of expert."

The basic learning principle underlying the facilitator's role is that modeling is the most effective mode of teaching. (When facilitators personally behave and interact with others in the ways they know are humanly and educationally desirable, they are modeling.) In the area of human relations and interpersonal skills, there is broad agreement on this principle. Cross (1976: 211), for example, cites Carkhuff's repeated emphasis on "the importance of the trainer's level of interpersonal functioning.'" Egan (1970:134-135). speaking in the context of a contract group, says that the leader-member "...promotes the contract perhaps principally by modeling the behavior called for by the contract...."

It is clear from the foregoing that, to be effective, the facilitator of a learning community needs to have attained a certain measure of personal integration and a high level of interpersonal skills. It should also be noted that this state of development is not at all incompatible with the facilitator's being a struggling, learning, growing, in-process human being. If facilitators are perceived as being this way, the so-called "halo effect" is considerably diminished; and their humanness, their realness, and their credibility is enhanced. They thereby become truly imitable models of persons-in-process.

If facilitators are effective in their modeling, then participants, seeing how it is done, will in fact begin, with varying degrees of consciousness, to imitate their attitudes and behaviors. The group is like a family. According to Rubin (1977:27), as children, "We learned through imitating our parents and practicing with our brothers and sisters." As adults, people

learn by imitating their peers. An important transition then begins to occur. The leader gradually relinquishes responsibility, and group members begin to take more responsibility for the group process. Egan (1970:135) calls this "the diffusion of leadership."

On Videotaping

"The concept of feedback,' says Cross (1976:177), "is a kingpin of most learning theory." She continues, "People learn most effectively if they have immediate and continuous feedback about their performance, and learning effective human relations is no exception." Cross identifies several feedback mechanisms available to laboratory educators, the most common of which is "open and frank discussion." She also lists "videotape recording and replaying of group sessions." Cross (1976:217) speaks of the "self-confrontation" made possible by videotape.

Gordon and Falk (1972:14) mention videorecording's dual usefulness in either the "cognitive or affective domains."

Gagne (1970:346-347), while discussing the communication functions performed in instruction by various components, supports the effectiveness of videotape when he speaks of the functions of gaining and controlling attention and of providing a model for expected learning outcomes. He specifically mentions the special effectiveness and appropriateness of moving pictures when the learning of human behavior is involved.

Summary

The learning community was defined as one form of a Rogerian encounter group. Carl Rogers' theoretical description of the intensive group experience was cited. The details of its adaptation were spelled out, together with possible learning outcomes, especially increased self-awareness and interpersonal effectiveness.

The need for alternative educational methods and approaches was pointed out by Cross, Skinner, Coulson, and O'Banion. The learning community was pre-

sented as one such alternative.

The importance of the facilitator's role was emphasized. Descriptions were given of the three facilitator qualities which Rogers sees as essential to a growth-promoting atmosphere: genuineness, empathic understanding, and unconditional positive regard. Rogers' key quality of realness/genuineness was shown to correspond closely with the self-disclosure advocated by Jourard and Egan. The facilitator's modeling was presented as the best form of teaching. The underlying learning principle operative in the learning community was that people learn by imitation.

The special effectiveness of using videotapes for learning human behavior was noted by Cross, Gagne, Gordon and Falk.

PROCEDURES

At West Valley College, members of the fall 1976 class in Counseling 15, Achieving Dialog, asked to continue meeting as a group after the class officially ended. This course emphasized learning one-to-one communication skills. These students wanted to develop their skills further and have more opportunities to practice communication. They also wished simply to continue being together and seeing each other.

The Dean of Counseling approved a follow-up, non-credit group as a counseling service. It was scheduled for a series of twelve meetings (once a week on Fridays from 2:30-4:00 p.m. The group, in fact, often ran until 4:30 or 5:00). A few people who had completed previous Achieving Dialog classes were invited to round out and balance the group (e.g., for male-female distribution). The group began with seventeen students. After several meetings, there remained twelve active participants. These people completed the series of meetings.

The first, fifth, and last meetings of the group were videotaped in the college TV studio. This required a producer/director and two cameramen.

Each of these sixty-minute tapes was edited down to approximately twenty minutes, so that the three sections together comprised a single sixty-minute demonstration tape as the end-product.

After each videotaping session, the tape was played back immediately (according to the limited time available. The studio closed at 4:00 p.m.). A copy was kept on file at the Audio-Visual circulation desk for individual and small group viewing. In the original design, each tape was to be seen at the next weekly meeting following filming for feedback from the instructor and other group members. As it turned out, the group decided against this after the first showing (during the second meeting). They preferred to see the tapes on their own time, bring feedback to the group, and use meeting time for actual encounter/interaction. This speaks convincingly of the strong value students placed on being together in the learning community. This is borne out by the fact that, even after the group ended formally (after the twelfth meeting), they continued to meet weekly in a private setting throughout most of the summer.

Just before the videotaping of the first meeting, the instructor reviewed with students a set of questions (Appendix A) to be used as a guideline for their initial participation and for identifying personal learning objectives. These questions were discussed with them, and any ambiguities clarified before taping began. Some of these questions were suggested as a reference point for completing the final written self-evaluation and course evaluation (Appendix C). This form was given to students immediately after the last meeting and subsequently returned by them. By this means, feedback was received concerning the effectiveness of the learning community in meeting student needs.

The second meeting of the follow-up group was devoted to viewing the first videotape. At the beginning of the third meeting, students were asked to read and respond to the brochure (Appendix B) describing a growth group, the

form of learning community deemed appropriate for their learning objectives. Since they agreed to this proposal, the brochure effected a shared understanding of the learning community and served as a guideline for group interaction. After the videotaping of the twelfth and final session, an additional follow-up meeting was held one evening for viewing the last tape and giving feedback.

The final evaluation form (Appendix C) was essentially a self-report, a subjective instrument designed to assess what students had gained and learned from the experience, according to their own personal judgment. This was deemed appropriate, because the learning community itself is essentially a subjective and intersubjective experience. Moreover, the students are the "customers," so to speak, whose satisfaction from this experience is paramount.

The evaluation form passed through several stages. It grew progressively. At each stage, input was sought from students regarding clarity of questions. Some were reworded as a result. Some participants contributed questions they wanted to respond to. Feedback was incorporated from the cluster research associate. Separate elements of Rogerian and Skinnerian theory were incorporated into discrete questions. Students were asked about their perceptions concerning the application of these theories and the benefits they received as learners. The instructor asked for personal feedback. Information was sought regarding use of and learnings from the videotapes. Several open-end questions were included. Each question on the entire form was intended to obtain the information desired, including free responses and comments. The final instrument was pretested with four students from the group. Each declared it to be clear and understandable.

Limitations

Perhaps the major limitation associated with this practicum is touched upon by Rogers (1951:ix-x). He refers to the great difficulty of describing in

words the experience of therapy. He says he'd willingly throw away his present manuscript if he could only "effectively point to the experience which is therapy." "It is a process, a thing-in-itself," he says, "an experience, a relationship, a dynamic." He almost despairs of capturing "that living experience in words." There is a parallel difficulty in attempting to communicate verbally the experience which is a learning community.

In terms of the learning objectives of this study, a serious limitation arose from the brief time span allotted. It takes time to grow. Time together. A lot of time. The pace must be unhurried, the expectations modest. As Fromm (Seebohm, 1977:186) recently noted:

> We know from nature how long a plant grows; we know from nature how long a pregnant woman must wait till the baby is born. There is a lesson to be learnt from nature -- that everything takes time, everything grows slowly, in contrast to the overhurried rhythm of our lives.

Another limitation was operative inasmuch as the videotaping was a first for all participants, including the instructor. Due to their self-consciousness, they were far less relaxed and spontaneous than usual. Moreover, some were simply unwilling to discuss highly personal matters for public record. The tapes to a certain extent, therefore, failed to capture some of the realness and depth of exchange which occured in sessions which were not taped.

A final limitation: the learning community ended very close to the end of the semester. Students quickly turned their attention to preparing for final exams and summer activities. This made it practically impossible to utilize any other source of evaluation input. Even final evaluation forms, handed out May 27, were not returned until after mid-August. Students had been given a suggested three week time limit. The fact is that students had to be reminded several times to complete the forms, both in person and via phone calls. The interpretation of this fact was that students were somewhat lacking in motivation to do paper work for this non-credit class, good-

intentioned though they were. Perhaps some regarded this more as the instructor's need, even though a serious attempt was made to motivate them by pointing out that reflection on the entire process could lead to significant learnings.

Assumptions

In this study it was assumed that:

1. student self-reports could be relied upon for valid information regarding what they had learned and what the experience meant to them;

2. at least some of the reported gains in knowledge and skill usage were due to students' participation in the learning community (Some were concurrently enrolled in other communication courses.);

3. students would be sufficiently motivated to view the videotapes on their own time and give feedback to group members during subsequent meetings (The latter did occur, but not as much as was anticipated. The principal use seemed to be for personal learning.);

4. the instructor's expectations were operative in the learning community, affected participants and group process, and influenced learning outcomes.

This last point requires amplification. Gumpert and Milligan (Roueche and Herrscher, 1976:84) discuss the so-called Pygmalion effect, or self-fulfilling prophecies. They point out how students tend to achieve what their teacher expects them to learn and/or experience: "...it is clear that what one person expects of another often has subtle, yet powerful, effects on the other." During this learning community experience, the instructor realized that he expected many things of participants. (Some of these were "caught" rather than explicitly taught.) These expectations were that students would:

1. grow as persons;

2. learn skills and gain knowledge which would apply to their life situations;

3. disclose themselves;

4. learn through imitation;

5. become more self-actualizing;

6. take more responsibility for their lives;

7. become more assertive;

8. take progressively more responsibility in the group as co-instructors and co-facilitators;

9. be caring and supportive of one another;

10. enjoy the time together;

11. move towards skill mastery;

12. come to value and appreciate the learning community experience; and

13. develop greater trust in themselves and in one another.

The assumption, then, was that these expectations were perceived by students and influenced their learning.

RESULTS

The group began with seventeen participants. After several meetings, the number had dropped to twelve. These people completed the series of meetings. There were three men and nine women. Two people were single, eight married, one separated, and one divorced. The average of members was thirty-eight.

In a sense, there were two different results emerging from this study. One was a product, the final videotape. (The videotape is not presented with this practicum; but discussion of its intended use was included.) The other result was the set of findings from the final evaluation form (Appendix C). Its seventeen items were designed to assess student responses to the learning community experience. They are given in the following pages.

The first question asked, "As you reflect on this follow-up group as a total experience, how do you feel about it overall?" Responses were:

1 very dissatisfied

2 somewhat dissatisfied

0 neutral/so-so

6 reasonably satisfied

3 very satisfied

The second question inquired, "During the group, to what extent did you take responsibility for yourself and for your own personal growth?" (On the ten-point scale below, numbers in parentheses represent self-ratings and corresponding percentages.)

not at all				a little				a lot	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
					(2)	(3)	(1)	(3)	(3)
					(17%)	(25%)	(8%)	(25%)	(25%)

The third question was, "Did you discover anything during this experience (about yourself or others, for example) that perhaps you didn't expect?" Students responded as follows:

No 0 Yes 11 (one omission)

Students were invited, "If Yes, feel free to write about it below." Some discoveries were reported. One man said:

> I don't remember any large surprises or major insights, however I experienced many small surprises. One was getting some very valuable and indepth feedback one afternoon when all I asked for was just a general response.

One woman stated, "I have the capacity of being a much better facilitator than I have thought." Another man said:

> In reflecting about my experience in the growth group I am aware of the meaningfulness of being able to share with fellow pilgrims in the journey of life. When I entered the group in the beginning I had reservations about whether or not I would fit in with a group that was already

formed and its members comfortable with each other. As the weeks progressed I found the spirit of love and caring -- warmth and acceptance. I now realize how important it is for me in my life to be involved with likeminded people who are in the process of growing and willing to be open with their feelings and develop a comfortable trusting atmosphere in which we can all have a chance to grow.

Another woman had a sudden realization: "I don't need other people's acceptance in order to still feel good. I still like me -- a lot!"

The fourth question was, "In your opinion has being in this group contributed towards your feeling better about yourself as a person and as a communicator?" Responses were:

__0__ not at all

__4__ not much but a little

__5__ quite a lot

__3__ very much so

The fifth question asked, "Do you think you've gained new skills (or improved ones you've had) as a result of being in this group?" Ten students said yes. Two were unsure. None said no.

The sixth question was, "Do you think you've changed (or continued to change) in a desirable direction as a result of this group experience?" Nine answered yes. Three were unsure. No one said no. When asked, "Do you expect the changes to be lasting?", one indicated "somewhat -- to some extent." Seven checked "for the most part, yes." Three said "definitely yes." There was one omission.

The seventh item stated:

> In his description of an encounter or growth group (see GROUP brochure for the full statement), Rogers says, "Individuals come to know themselves and each other more fully than is possible in the usual social or working relationships...." Does your perception of what happened in our group concur with Rogers' statement (just quoted)?

All twelve students answered affirmatively.

Questions eight through eleven continued checking out students' perceptions of other elements of Rogers' description of an encounter group. The eighth question was:

> Did the interpersonal atmosphere, in your perception, encourage individuals to drop their defenses and facades and thus enable them to relate directly and openly to other members of the group?

Eleven said yes. One was unsure. No one said no.

The ninth question asked, "In your perception, did the interpersonal atmosphere of the group generate trust among group members?" Eleven said yes. No one said no. One was unsure.

The tenth question inquired:

> Did you see this group as enabling persons "to recognize and change self-defeating attitudes, test out and adopt more innovative and constructive behaviors, and subsequently to relate more adequately and effectively to others in his (her) everyday life situation?

All answered yes.

The eleventh question was, "In your opinion, do you feel you yourself have become somewhat more effective in your interpersonal relationships in your everyday life situations?" All twelve answered yes.

Item twelve stated:

> With all due credit to B.F. Skinner, I believe in the effectiveness of positive reinforcement as a means of recognizing, encouraging, and strengthening appropriate communication behaviors and effective use of interpersonal skills.
>
> As I have observed myself in action in groups and viewed myself on videotape, I have seen myself responding in ways that I regard as positively reinforcing. Would you please read through the following list and check off those behaviors which you yourself have EITHER experienced from me personally as positively reinforcing to you OR perceived as positively reinforcing to someone else in the group.

Student responses were as follows:

12 (1) listening attentively to a person and paying close attention through direct eye contact

11 (2) paraphrasing the person's idea or feeling or desire

10 (3) saying "uh-huh" (or something similar) in response

10 (4) nodding my head

9 (5) using a beckoning or circular hand gesture which says nonverbally "Yes, tell me more" or "Yes, do you want to say something?"

10 (6) raising my eyebrows while looking at a person in order to invite response or input

12 (7) reaching over and touching (or embracing) a person

12 (8) asking questions to clarify the person's meaning or intention

12 (9) giving positive feedback; e.g., complimenting people on their growth or effective use of communication skills; expressing appreciation

12 (10) making supportive and/or encouraging statements to individuals

The thirteenth item was an essay question:

I'm wondering how else (besides the above) you perceive me functioning (doing and being) in the learning community. I'd appreciate your comments, both negative and positive. For example, did you find any of my behaviors not helpful or facilitative? I guess I'm also curious about what attitudes you see and value in me.

All but two students responded to this question. Their statements follow:

Following behaviors were not facilitative (#'s from question 12) 2,3, 4, 5, 6 -- occasionally #9. With due credit to Skinner, when I sensed that any form of reinforcement was manipulative I resisted you. However, when I sensed myself supported and accepted by you then I allowed in almost any form of reinforcement. For me manipulative reinforcement, positive or negative, doesn't work. There are lots of attitudes that I value in you... compassion, strength, purpose, love, warmth, etc. More than anything else I get your desire to help other people.

Possibly your most valuable function, beyond introduction of concepts, was your ability to consider any and all ideas as having merit.

I appreciated your warmth and sincere caring about each individual in the group. You are looked upon as a friend and not just a facilitator. I would suggest to you, however, that as appropriate opportunity happened in group that you draw the more quiet and timid out by asking direct questions to them. I realize you want to honor the space they are at and encourage responsibility on their behalf to contribute to the group, but I have observed many occasions where the more vocal and agressive people jump in and monopolize. (Ex. Jenny, Dennis, myself sometimes usually always had some worthwhile comments to make but too polite or lacking in self assertion to get the opening they needed)

I enjoy the way you focus on one person while he/she is talking.

...I appreciate your non-authoritarian position. I would like to see you deal and confront more often with your personal feelings, rather than holding on to them.

Jack functioning in the learning community -- obviously a group is "your thing." You look and act as if you are really into it. The exchanges within the group appear to be a pleasant challenge to you and you look rewarded at the end. I feel from your comments that you learn from each meeting and really appreciate that learning.

...the thing that I appreciated most was your understanding and help in clarifying my messages. I'm flashing on support that I received from you that helped me find what I was looking for, to keep going and get in touch with my feeling rather than to let the situation just slide by. I also very much appreciate everything mentioned in question 12.

I wish you had been more forceful on occasion. I experience you as being quite supportive and having lots of insight.

I found Jack to be one of us -- sharing part of himself along with us. It enabled the atmosphere to be relaxed (for me)! It was not like a facilitator that was distant, holding back, merely directing the members of the group. His active participation for me created a most comfortable space in which I could allow myself to share.

The attitudes I see, have experienced and value in you are your concern and caring for us individually and as a group; ability to listen, to really hear and be with me; and positive unconditional regard.

I value your sincerity, Jack. You are not afraid to say "I don't understand." The three attitudinal states Rogers describes are part of your make up. You care for others and it shows. I feel you are always with a person, not rushing them on or dismissing them either verbally or with eye contact.

The fourteenth item asked about the use of the videotapes: "Which of the videotapes of the follow-up group did you view?" Responses were:

First tape 12 Viewed 17 times

Second tape 11 Viewed 20 times

Third tape 10 Viewed 14 times

Students then were invited, "If you care to, please comment upon anything you have learned through viewing the tapes." Some representative responses follow.

One woman stated that "...in general viewing myself has improved my self-image." Another said:

Through viewing the videotapes I was able to develop more self-confidence, particularly as how others may hear or see me. I have learned my communication is much clearer and more effective than I had believed. I feel more comfortable allowing myself to express my ideas and feelings. I have also seen growth, confidence and caring in other members of the group.

This same woman told how the tape reinforced a learning:

Viewing the last tape reminded me that I had withheld negative feelings and was experiencing discomfort, This has reinforced the importance for me to deal with my feelings and express myself openly and honestly.

A man reported that "...one of the particularly valuable aspects of me viewing the tape was to see my nonverbal communication." He shared a detailed list of things he had noticed. Some he liked. Some he wished to change.

After seeing the second tape, one woman enthusiastically wrote a note, which said, in part:

> ...it is beautiful. The communication "jargon" was absent. The group cared about each other and were not so self-conscious and self-centered. The philosophical exchanges were good enough to take lecture notes on.

This woman found the tapes "fascinating to watch." She cryti cally recorded a personal learning: "I need to lose weight."

Another woman reported a "significant learning:"

> I realized that I was not taking responsibility for my attitudes. It was very refreshing to see myself. It pointed out that I am a better communicator than I am willing to give myself credit for. I have strength and courage when I am in an okay place with myself. Certainly have good reason to like myself. I want and need to stay aware and in the here and now.

She also noted that:

> Being on tape did make me feel like I was on the spot in the beginning. But having had the experience has helped me build confidence and self-esteem.

A man reported a benefit he gained:

> In viewing the tapes I found it helpful to both see and hear our dialogue at a later time. With time to reflect and clarify my feelings and observe nonverbal and verbal messages I often cleared up difficulties in my head concerning specific problems in relating. In general I got a better perspective on what happened in group.

The evaluation form's fifteenth question was:

> As you know, I think of our group as a learning community (one of several different varieties). If you also see it this way, I'm curious to know what this experience has helped you to learn (if anything). How has this learning community facilitated your growth and learning (if that fits your experience)? What has this group meant to you? What benefits have you gained from it?

Since student learning was one of the principal concerns of this study,

a full range of responses follows:

I feel I can recognize more clearly now when I have exhausted the possibilities of communication. Due to taking this course I have a check list to evaluate my own efforts. Once I've assured myself I've attempted open, honest, and direct communication without being "understood," I can accept there is a need on the part of the other person not to understand. Being clear on this allows me to take care of my needs, make plans and take responsibility for actions without always being understood.

I have gained a lot of confidence from groups such as these. I have become assertive in my communication with my husband.... I am more to the point and I am more direct. I go with my feelings and am in touch with them more readily, quicker to respond to them. I am letting more people in.

The continuation of this group has supported and reinforced my newly acquired skills. I have found it beneficial to have group to help me integrate the skills into my daily living...I really need to confront rather than holding on and ending up with a bunch of resentments.

This group is great for providing an arena for people (myself) to deal with process. To be able to discuss the process gives me a better understanding of what makes me tick and those around me.

I was disappointed that I chose to hold back and maintain facades and defenses with the group (if I was personally involved in an exchange). It was easy to contribute or ask questions if someone else was the "subject" of the exchange. Hopefully, with more experience in a growth group setting, I will be able to take more responsibility for myself and risk more.

From this group I experienced growth in self expression and how I want to relate to people. The group has a special meaning to me -- I feel happy going to the group.

I asked for a safe place to be soft and open and talk about the painful, hard things. I got that. I watched the process of confronting and learned from it. With more experience and better self-esteem I hope to be able to confront when it is necessary.

I find I need a group like this emotionally, socially, and for personal growth. I found I hold back from speaking in a larger group. I can listen and hear what others have to say. My feelings are valid. I have a better self image.

The learning community experience has helped me to trust myself and my feelings with others. The community provides me with the freedom to express myself. It is often like a caring "family-like" atmosphere, where I can be heard and understood without judgment. Where I can learn and grow through others' experience and processes.

It would be difficult for me to express in a few words what group has meant to me. It came at a time in my life when I really needed to get out of myself and be open and share with others. Working through difficult emotional problems with people and finding out that they still care. Wow! That was a special learning experience for me. Our group has continued and

I feel closer to the members each time we meet. Simply knowing that you're not alone or unique, that others also have similar problems in life and are open to sharing, caring, and mostly loving me as a fellow human being -- It's beautiful to know there is a place to go and be me. I am O.K.

Question sixteen asked: "If the group 'worked' for you (was satisfying to you), what do you think were the main elements that made this possible?" Some responses follow:

Unqualified acceptance!

I would describe the group as trusting, accepting, caring, non-threatening, sharing, real, true, clear, honest, loving, warm and non-judgmental.

Yes, the group has worked for me. The main elements were trust, caring, and openness. Primarily I would rate the positive unconditional regard I and others receive from you, Jack. I have experienced that the mood or climate is provided by your modeling of trust, caring, listening, and the "regard" you have for each of us. Thank you for encouraging me to be me.

It was OK to state where we were at any given moment.

WE CARED ABOUT EACH OTHER and you were our model. You set the tone.

Question seventeen (the last) invited any further comments. In addition to consistent responses of appreciation there were three noteworthy remarks:

I am the most delighted with the discovery of my ability to be a facilitator.

Dialog classes with <u>you</u> have had a significant influence in my life.

I feel that even though time will not allow me to keep up relationships formed in class, the experiences have become part of my support system.

A rather extended postscript was so insightful that it deserves recording in full. The woman said:

I personally would like to see more of a balance -- besides acknowledging and reinforcing the positive (goodies) -- I find it important to acknowledge negative feelings, self-defeating behaviors, as we each experience or perceive them. I sense in myself as well as others to sometimes suppress these. This tends to take away from my authenticity.

After further reflection, she continued, skillfully and tactfully staying primarily with her own experience (although she was also saying something to the facilitator):

Jack, as I look back over my evaluation I sense there is something missing or an area I guess I'm unsettled about. I'd like to explore this

with myself as well as with you. I respect and appreciate positive regard very highly and I also respect and appreciate caring honesty to deal with confrontation, especially when I'm uncomfortable -- then I'm having positive regard for myself when I choose to move with what appears to be negative.

After this point relating self-respect to honest confrontation, she shared a difficulty she has had in the learning community:

> What I'm trying to say is I found this especially hard to do in our group. This problem may be only mine. In fact it may have nothing to do with the group as a whole. But I was aware of fear or discouragement as I experienced this. I have no need to change anyone else's behavior -- it is more for me to come to grips with what I'm experiencing and learn how to deal with discomfort and negative experiences I have when relating with other persons. I suspect you may share this problem with me.

After this accurate observation, she concludes with a request:

> At times, I guess the atmosphere was too sugary for me and I would appreciate or I'm wanting more modeling of the other side. It still falls under positive regard doesn't it? "Authentic balance."

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After reflecting on the total experience, nine of the twelve participants expressed at least reasonable satisfaction with the learning community. One woman was somewhat dissatisfied because the group conflicted with her work. This caused several absences. She also expected the new group to be very similar to the old (and it wasn't). Another woman who said she was somewhat dissatisfied realized that her "expectations for the group were perhaps unrealistic." At the end of her evaluation, she stated:

> Reading over this I find what I've been somewhat aware of as I wrote. I've gained a very valuable insight, shared some growth experiences with some fine people, so why am I somewhat disappointed?

The only person who was very dissatisfied wrote that this was "because there are still so many questions left unanswered. We didn't move as far as I had hoped." In a personal interview, this woman explained that she was very frustrated. She felt there was a lot of misunderstanding about her. The feedback she was receiving did not fit her perception of herself.

The latter two women, as they could, continued to attend meetings

during the summer after the group had formally ended. This fact and other comments they made indicate their positive valuing of the group in spite of their dissatisfaction. The above three reactions show the importance of setting moderate and realistic goals.

Because of continual emphasis on the concept, students were well aware of the importance of taking responsibility for themselves and their growth. Their self-evaluations reflected this. They ranged from taking "a little" to "a lot" of responsibility. The woman who said she was disappointed in herself because she "chose to hold back and maintain facades and defenses with the group" illustrates the inner struggle of many.

The students who reported unexpected learnings supported Rogers' belief in the individual's capacity for exploration and discovery in the free and supportive atmosphere of the group.

Questions four through six were concerned with personal changes. All students reported some movement towards feeling better about themselves as persons and communicators. All but one were sure that they'd gained new skills or improved ones they already had. Nine felt they'd changed in a desirable direction as a result of the experience. Two were unsure, one because of her concurrent "heavy involvement in est" (Erhard Seminars Training). Eleven expected their changes to be lasting, at least to some extent.

Questions seven through eleven explored whether students perceived the elements of Rogers' theoretical definition actually occurring in the learning community. Their responses were almost unanimously affirmative. There were only two "unsure" notations out of a possible fifty-five responses. In other words, Rogers' hypotheses were seen as verified.

The instructor behaviors regarded as positively reinforcing (a la Skinner) were also perceived by students as having that effect. One student, as was noted, stated her opinion that some behaviors were not facilitative.

Although it is difficult to understand how the behaviors under question (like paraphrasing and nodding one's head) could be perceived as manipulative, it is certainly easy to agree that any manipulative reinforcement is undesirable.

Another woman said she believed that reinforcement was "...a facet deeper than a specific behavior. For me it is an au[illegible]tic concern you, Jack, display and feel for us as worthwhile persons." It is precisely such concern that prevents reinforcement from becoming manipulative or mechanistic.

In this paper, the facilitator's role was presented as central to group's learning process. Equally important were students' perceptions of his functioning. Reports show that students perceived the facilitator as possessing the three attitudinal qualities identified by Rogers as essential to learning. Two students accurately perceived the facilitator's current growth need: to become more authentic through owning and more openly expressing negative feelings.

In general, students felt very positively about the videotapes. The evaluations indicate that viewing them resulted in considerable learning. The tapes proved valuable for modifying their own behavior. They also enhanced self-perception and self-acceptance, self-esteem and self-confidence. Principal difficulties mentioned were a sensitivity to private matters, self-consciousness, and resultant inhibitions. Some students reported that the tapes enabled them to review and better understand group process.

Perhaps the principal questions underlying this study are: Of what benefit is the learning community to students? Does it contribute to their learning and personal growth? The many responses quoted disclose the range and variety of learnings students attributed to their experience in the learning community. They reported both cognitive and affective results. Throughout the life of the group students repeatedly took the opportunity to put into practice John Dewey's principle of "learning by doing." There were reports involving

transfer of learning to work and home situations, with resultant improvements in communication. Most seemed consciously aware that the learning community was a safe, caring, non-threatening, and accepting place to be and to grow. It provided an interpersonal atmosphere conducive to discovery, sharing, problem-solving, mutual support, and honest interaction. Student reports seemed to provide considerable indirect evidence that the instructor's expectations (noted on pages sixteen and seventeen) were in fact having some influence on learning outcomes.

Several students seemed explicitly aware of the role of the facilitator as a model in helping the group to "work" for them. (This was the concern of the sixteenth question.) Their other comments, interestingly enough, focused almost entirely on the Rogerian qualities present in the group rather than on specific behaviors or skills. It seems accurate to state that by the later stages of the group almost all participants were exercising these Rogerian qualities to a considerable extent.

Students responding to the final open-end question consistently expressed their appreciation for this experience. The lengthy and insightful comment about the problem of suppressed negative feelings merits acknowledgment. It highlights one of the most difficult skills to master, confrontation. It also illustrates the challenge of the Rogerian qualities of openness and realness. Self-awareness and "authentic balance" are not easy to come by. Even if people possess these qualities, they must still muster the courage to confront with caring.

Hopefully, this practicum and the demonstration tape (along with the three originals) can make some small contribution at West Valley College towards increasing what Otto (1973:3) describes as a growing "awareness that the small group is the best medium for actualizing potential."

Student evaluations have produced substantial evidence that the

learning community experience has power, power to change individuals and increase their interpersonal effectiveness. Their reports give support to Rogers' contentions that (1970:1) the intensive small group experience is a "potent" instrument and that (1969:304) it is "one of the most effective means yet discovered for facilitating constructive learning, growth, and change...."

Implications

The fact that a majority of group members has continued to meet during the summer suggests that some people's needs are not met by their ordinary life experiences and that a learning community experience can be a means of meeting these needs. In this case at least, relationships developed; and people wanted to maintain them.

One woman experienced great emotional discomfort and strong negative feelings upon seeing and hearing herself on videotape. After reviewing an early session, she came in for individual counseling. She also worked on this problem in group. Feedback was positive and supportive. Gradually, with continued support and repeated viewings of the three tapes (she saw each at least three times) she settled emotionally. She also modified her behavior in ways she decided were appropriate for her, and she became decidedly positive in her feelings about herself. This experience illustrates two things: the group's support and feedback function and facilitators' special responsibility to make it known that they are personally available for follow-up meetings on an individual basis (or that this service is accessible through other campus professionals).

Another implication is that people, ordinary people, need to recognize their power to be supportive of other persons. They need to see that they can be helpful or therapeutic or nourishing to others without being trained psychologists or counselors. This basic human power is what Rogers (1970:2)

refers to as people's "healing capacity" and their "therapeutic ability" (1970:58).

Recommendations

A caveat to interested practitioners: the old adage holds true. "There is no substitute for experience." Reading about the learning community communicates its reality only feebly at best. There is considerable room for misunderstanding and misinterpretation (not to mention the necessary incompleteness of this presentation). The next best thing is the audio-visual experience available via videotape or film. Better still is actual participation in Rogerian groups. Best of all would be to attend the La Jolla Program (See Rogers (1970:149-157) for a full description) or one of his person-centered workshops (See Rogers (1977:143-185) for details).

A personal conviction is that no useful integration of Rogerian theory is possible without experiential learning. Nor is it possible to move towards high level development of the art of facilitation without extensive practice in professional settings, including supervision and consultation.

Although Rogers does not believe in "screening of participants" (1970: 119), a preliminary interview has nevertheless proven to have the following advantages at West Valley College:

1. It creates an implicit contract with more or less explicit terms.

2. It effects a shared understanding of the forthcoming experience among group members.

3. Students tend to accept some responsibility for being co-facilitators.

4. Students make a committment regarding their involvement and attendance.

5. Facilitator and student become acquainted as persons and begin a relationship.

It is further recommended that:

1. considering the strongly favorable student response, means be explored for gradually increasing the number and variety of learning community experiences at West Valley College;

2. future groups offered through Counseling services be videotaped as a learning strategy (Since it is somewhat costly for a formal production in the TV studio, perhaps this could be accomplished through a portable video-recorder in the usual group setting.);

3. consideration be given to the specific possibility of utilizing the learning community/growth group experience as a means of staff development towards improving human relations and interpersonal communication throughout the college;

4. the demonstration videotape (and the three originals) be used for a variety of purposes:

a) to provide information to individuals and groups;

b) to effect attitudinal change through greater understanding and recognition of the learning community's utility in meeting student needs; and

c) to publicize the college's pilot Program in Interpersonal Communication.

A technical recommendation: some participants noted that during the second taping session they were frequently distracted by the excessively loud tone of voice used by a new cameraman talking over the two-way communication equipment. This problem was discussed and corrected before the third tape was filmed. It is recommended that this problem be anticipated and eliminated in future videotape sessions.

If the above recommendations are implemented, their principal impact could be twofold:

1. More students could be given the opportunity to experience the

learning community and thereby improve their interpersonal effectiveness both at the college and in their everyday life situations.

2. Staff members (both certificated and classified) could reap similar benefits, with consequent improvement in the human dimensions of the instructional and public relations processes.

REFERENCES

Abrams, M.H., gen. ed., and others. The Norton Anthology of English Literature. 3d ed. New York: Norton, 1974.

Coulson, William R. A Sense of Community. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1973.

Cross, K. Patricia. Accent on Learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1976.

Egan, Gerard. Encounter: Group Processes for Interpersonal Growth. Belmont, CA.: Brooks/Cole, 1970.

Gagné, Robert M. The Conditions of Learning. 2d ed. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.

Gordon, George N., and Irving A. Falk. Videocassette Technology in American Education. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Educational Technology Publications, 1972

Gumpert, Peter, and Carol Milligan. "The Teacher as Pygmalion: Comments on the Psychology of Expectation," Toward Instructional Accountability: A Practical Guide to Educational Change, eds. John E. Roueche and Barton R. Herrscher. Palo Alto, CA.: Westinghouse Learning Press, 1973.

Jourard, Sidney M. The Transparent Self. New York: D. Van Nostrand, 1971.

Lande, Nathaniel. Mind Styles/Life Styles. Los Angeles: Price/Stern/Sloan, 1976.

O'Banion, Terry. "Counseling and the Emerging Model of Student Development," New Directions For Community Colleges, No. 8, Winter 1974.

Otto, Herbert A. Group Methods To Actualize Human Potential: A Handbook. Beverly Hills, CA.: Holistic Press, 1973.

Rogers, Carl R. Client-Centered Therapy. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951.

Rogers, Carl R. "The Necessary and Sufficient Conditions of Therapeutic Personality Change," Journal of Consulting Psychology, No. 21, 1957.

Rogers, Carl R. On Becoming a Person. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961.

Rogers, Carl R. "A Plan for Self-directed Change in an Educational System," Educational Leadership, May, 1967.

Rogers, Carl R. Freedom to Learn. Columbus, Ohio: Merrill, 1969.

Rogers, Carl R. Carl Rogers on Encounter Groups. New York: Harper and Row, 1970.

Rogers, Carl R. Carl Rogers on Personal Power. New York: Delacorte, 1977.

Rubin, Theodore Isaac. "On Relating," Mainliner, United Airlines, February, 1977.

Seebohm, Caroline. "How to be happy with who you are," Home and Garden, April, 1977.

Skinner, B.F. Beyond Freedom and Dignity. New York: Bantam/Vintage, 1971.

APPENDIX A

West Valley College
Achieving Dialog Group

Jack Seiquist
Instructor-Learner

OPENING QUESTIONS

1) How are you feeling right now (as we begin our group)?

2) What are you wanting to learn for yourself through participating in this group? What are your personal learning objectives? Perhaps there are one or two skills you'd like to improve on, or you may have a more general goal.

3) What are you wanting for the others in the group?

4) What kind of interpersonal atmosphere and interaction are you wanting and envisioning?

5) How can you help this to happen? How can you get what you want - both for yourself and for the others? What are you willing to do and contribute? How can you/we create the desired interpersonal atmosphere?

6) Is there anything you need to say or do right now before we begin to interact more freely?

APPENDIX B

GROUP

as offered by

Jack Seiquist

Counselor

West Valley College

What's a growth group all about?

Dr. Carl Rogers, an internationally known and highly respected authority on groups, has expressed his opinion (in his book, Carl Rogers on Encounter Groups) that the intensive small group experience is "the most rapidly spreading social invention of the century." Elsewhere he has offered an often quoted and near-classic description of the kind of group I personally value and am offering you:

> The basic encounter group consists of ten to fifteen persons and a facilitator or leader. It is relatively unstructured, providing a climate of maximum freedom for personal expression, exploration of feelings, and interpersonal communication. Emphasis is upon the interactions among the group members, in an atmosphere which encourages each to drop his defenses and facades and thus enables the person to recognize and change self-defeating attitudes, test out and adopt more innovative and constructive behaviors, and subsequently to relate more adequately and effectively to others in his everyday life.

I ask group members to work together to create an interpersonal atmosphere characterized by deep acceptance, listening, risk taking, involvement, commitment, and gentle frankness.

You're probably curious about my personal approach to groups. While my training and practice with both individuals and groups is mostly Rogerian, I have sought out and incorporated into my style learnings from Gestalt, bioenergetics, psychosynthesis, sensory awareness body movement, mini-labs, psychodrama, role playing, eastern and existential philosophy, and humanistic education. But, after all this, I want you to know that mainly I'll be the person I am with the person you are.

I'd like to tell you how I think about group and share with you some of my personal learnings.

Group is an occasion for persons to meet other persons. It's an occasion to be a person rather than a functionary or a role-player.

Group is an opportunity to identify and express those things that are unique and authentic about yourself as an individual person, rather than hiding them behind stereotyped, conformist images of self.

It's a chance to become more of what you want to be as a person.

It's an opportunity to recognize and express both positive and negative feelings in a more open, sensitive, and authentic way; to get in touch with and communicate your own unique needs and desires, feelings, aspirations, hopes, dreams, goals, and ambitions.

Hopefully you can heighten awareness of your inner life, becoming more conscious of what you are:

understanding
thinking/judging/intuiting
feeling (emotionally)
sensing (physically)
fantasizing/imagining
perceiving
remembering
valuing
wanting/wishing
planning/choosing/deciding
caring/loving

and can learn to more clearly distinguish these experiences one from another.

Group is an opportunity to give expression to this inner richness; to freely share what you are experiencing; and to be willing to be vulnerable to such exchange of feelings.

Group is a chance to discuss problems in your relationships and to gain ideas, help, and support regarding these problems.

It's also a chance to discuss your problems with yourself and the ways you would like to grow.

Sometimes a person comes to the group hoping to work out a conflict situation, or to make a personal decision, or to select new, and perhaps as yet undetermined, direction in life.

Sometimes I and others form lasting friendships with people we meet in group.

Being involved with people in groups gives a lot of meaning to my own life and provides me with a regular occasion to keep growing as a person.

Hopefully, most, if not all, persons in group will move toward coming together with the implicit (if not explicit) feeling that "It is good for us to be here together."

Why get involved in group?

The first three goals I list below are the most comprehensive and my favorite way of speaking about what one can possibly gain from group. In fact, all of the goals I set down merely indicate the range of possibilities rather than any assurance of specific attainments. I really want you to be realistic in your expectations, especially considering the short time we will be together. It takes time to grow! I offer not a product but a process:

> Growing as a person. . .developing the art of personal communication (by acquiring some expertise in specific communication skills) . . .learning more fully the art of being a person. . .learning to listen to feelings and meanings underlying but not necessarily explicit in

in verbal communication...discovering and appreciating (or at least respecting) attitudes, feelings, values, and life styles different than your own...realizing how differently others perceive you than you perceive yourself...achieving a better understanding and acceptance of yourself...learning to be more honest with yourself and with others...developing a heightened sensitivity to feelings and thus discovering the subtle emotional dimensions of relationships...learning more about the characteristics and responsibilities of meaningful interpersonal encounter...coming to think and feel more positively towards yourself

What communication skills can you develop?

I think it's helpful to be aware of specific skills that facilitate communication so that you can consciously acquire and practice them in and out of group. It also helps to reflect upon your progress in using these skills. I'd like to indicate some of the skills I think are more important:

Listening to yourself, trusting, and reporting your inner experience (using "I messages")...listening to the other: empathizing or understanding how the other person sees it or is feeling and then communicating that understanding to that person...and a closely related skill, focusing, where everyone in the group listens to the person speaking...talking to the person rather than about the person to the group, and saying "you" rather than "he" or "she"...speaking from your own experience: sharing learnings, feelings, and perceptions (and saying "I")...talking straight, or meaning what you say and saying what you mean...naming names...speaking up and out... assertiveness...taking the floor...speaking for yourself, taking responsibility and saying "I" rather than "we" or "you"...inviting participation...using silence creatively...checking out perceptions, feelings, impressions, fantasies...making appropriate eye contact with the person you are speaking to...giving and receiving feedback.

Is this what you want?

If you're aware of wanting to grow as a person,
If you want to communicate more effectively,
If you want to relate more genuinely,
Then this may be the experience you're looking for.

It'll be just a beginning.
It may lead to more...

If this is what you want, then I ask you to make a personal commitment to each member of the group that you will attend each of the group meetings (barring illness or other serious reasons).

Hopefully we will be able together to create the kind of experience I've been describing. It's not therapy. It's learning and growing together.

A parting word

After all the foregoing, I want you to understand that I promise you nothing...except that I'll be present to you in group as real-ly as I can for our agreed upon time together.

****

Videotape

If you'd like to see and hear for yourself what a growth group is like, I invite you to view my videotape entitled "A Learning Community." It's available (in color) at the A-V circulation desk in the Learning Resource Center. It'll give you a pretty good idea of the growth group experience.

APPENDIX C

PERSONAL INFORMATION

1) Sex F M (Circle one)

2) Age _____

3) Marital status: (Check one)

_____ single

_____ married

_____ separated

_____ divorced

4) If applicable, how many children do you have? _____

5) How many other learning communities (for example, Achieving Dialog, Philosophy of the Person, growth groups) have you participated in prior to this group? _____

APPENDIX C

West Valley College
Achieving Dialog Follow-up Group

Jack Seiquist
Instructor-Learner

FINAL EVALUATION

Dear Friend:

I very much appreciate your willingness to take the time to respond thoughtfully to this questionnaire. I trust that it will be a learning experience for you. I also hope that it will enable you and me to make fuller sense of our learning community/growth group experience of the past three months. THANK YOU!

1. As you reflect on this follow-up group as a total experience, how do you feel about it overall? (Check one answer below)

_____ very dissatisfied
_____ somewhat dissatisfied
_____ neutral/so-so
_____ reasonably satisfied
_____ very satisfied

2. During the group, to what extent did you take responsibility for yourself and for your own personal growth? (Indicate your estimate by circling the appropriate number.)

not at all						a little			a lot
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

3. Did you discover anything during this experience (about yourself or others, for example) that perhaps you didn't expect?
NO ___ YES ___. If yes, feel free to write about it below.

4. In your opinion has being in this group contributed towards your feeling better about yourself as a person and as a communicator?

_____ not at all
_____ not much but a little
_____ quite a lot
_____ very much so

5. Do you think you've gained new skills (or improved ones you've had) as a result of being in this group?

Yes _____ No _____ Unsure _____

6. Do you think you've changed (or continued to change) in a desirable direction as a result of this group experience?

Yes _____ No _____ Unsure _____

Do you expect the changes to be lasting?

_____ Not at all
_____ Somewhat - to some extent
_____ For the most part, yes
_____ Definitely yes

7. In his description of an encounter or growth group (see GROUP brochure for the full statement), Rogers says, "Individuals come to know themselves and each other more fully than is possible in the usual social or working relationships...". Does your perception of what happened in our group concur with Rogers' statement (just quoted)? (Check one)

Yes _____ No _____ Unsure _____

8. Did the interpersonal atmosphere, in your perception, encourage individuals to drop their defenses and facades and thus enable them to relate directly and openly to other members of the group? (Check one)

Yes _____ No _____ Unsure _____

9. In your perception, did the interpersonal atmosphere of the group generate trust among group members?

Yes _____ No _____ Unsure _____

10. Did you see this group as enabling persons "to recognize and change self-defeating attitudes, test out and adopt more innovation and constructive behaviors, and subsequently to relate more adequately and effectively to others in his (her) everyday life situation" ?

Yes _____ No _____ Unsure _____

11. In your opinion, do you feel you yourself have become somewhat more effective in your interpersonal relationships in your everyday life situations?

Yes _____ No _____ Unsure _____

12. With all due credit to B.F. Skinner, I believe in the effectiveness of positive reinforcement as a means of recognizing, encouraging, and strengthening appropriate communication behaviors and effective use of interpersonal skills.

As I have observed myself in action in groups and viewed myself on videotape, I have seen myself responding in ways that I regard as positively reinforcing. Would you please read through the following list and check off those behaviors which you yourself have EITHER experienced from me personally as positively reinforcing to you OR perceived as positively reinforcing to someone else in the group:

_____(1) listening attentively to a person and paying close attention through direct eye contact
_____(2) paraphrasing the person's idea or feeling or desire

_____ (3) saying "uh-huh" (or something similar) in response
_____ (4) nodding my head
_____ (5) using a beckoning or circular hand gesture which says nonverbally "Yes, tell me more" or "Yes, do you want to say something?"
_____ (6) raising my eyebrows while looking at a person in order to invite response or input.
_____ (7) reaching over and touching (or embracing) a person
_____ (8) asking questions to clarify the person's meaning or intention.
_____ (9) giving positive feedback; e.g., complementing people on their growth or effective use of communication skills; expressing appreciation.
_____(10) making supportive and/or encouraging statements to individuals

13. I'm wondering how else (besides the above) you perceive me functioning (doing and being) in the learning community. I'd appreciate your comments, both negative and positive. For example, did you find any of my behaviors not helpful or facilitative? I guess I'm also curious about what attitudes you see and value in me.

14. Which of the videotapes of the follow-up group did you view? (Please check your answers and give estimates of the number of times you watched it.

First tape_____Viewed _____times.

Second tape _____Viewed_____times.

Third tape_____Viewed_____times.

If you care to, please comment upon anything you have learned through viewing the tapes.

15. As you know, I think of our group as a learning community (one of several different varieties). If you also see it this way, I'm curious to know what this experience has helped you to learn (if anything). How has this learning community facilitated your growth and learning (if that fits your experience)? What has this group meant to you? What benefits have you gained from it?

16. If the group "worked" for you (was satisfying to you), what do you think were the main elements that made this possible?

17. I welcome any further comments. Thank you, friend!